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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [IN](#) [CH](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: MISHRA CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC TO U/S BURNS ABOUT  
INDIA-US TIES

Classified By: Charge Bob Blake for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: Meeting with U/S Burns and the Charge on June 25, former NSA Brajesh Mishra was cautiously optimistic on the US-India relationship. One of the architects of India's greatly expanded ties with Washington, Mishra stressed that progress would be incremental and evolutionary, that both governments should not nurse high expectations, but remained unconvinced that India and the US have defined them or devised a framework for their realization. He advised the Under Secretary not to expect dramatic changes in Indian voting behavior at the UN. While agreeing that there was a need for balance in Asia between China and other nations, Mishra ruled out confrontation with Beijing. He hopes to meet with Secretary Rice for further discussions when he visits Washington later in the year. End Summary.

Progress - but not Dramatic Progress  
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12. (C) After brief welcoming remarks, the Under Secretary asked Mishra for his views on US-India ties, noting that while the two governments are pushing ahead, it would require opposition BJP support to realise the potential in bilateral relations.

13. (C) Mishra expressed satisfaction with the intense dialogue between the two governments in the past six months. He agreed that the "Indian establishment" sees much promise in closer ties with the US, but the "substance is not yet there," which was possibly a result of "old thinking." Mishra urged both countries to "decide what they want and require" for the relationship to blossom, commenting that India and the US have not yet come to such an understanding and are "proceeding cautiously." He agreed with the Under Secretary that there is no hostility in India towards the US

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(as exists in Pakistan and other countries), except in the Communist parties, where such hostility is ideologically driven.

Need for Consensus on Bilateral Ties  
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14. (C) Mishra lamented that there is "no consensus" on the bilateral relationship in India, "as there is with the India-Russia relationship," which is "part of history." He attributed this to both the USG and the GOI, as "we should be very clear what we expect." It is very well that we have the "Next Steps in Strategic Partnership," more proposed cooperation on energy, space, and defense, but these had not yet attained a "critical mass." Both countries must agree on the basic nature of the relationship for it to move forward, he stated.

15. (C) Recalling that a colleague had recently suggested that the US was ready to enter into a "NATO plus" relationship with India in defense, Mishra wondered whether India was willing to enter into one, as it would involve similar ties as the US and the UK currently enjoy. He hoped that the many high-level visits would increase the level of dialogue, but predicted that each side would maintain its own expectations.

The Need to Remove Obstacles  
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16. (C) Commenting that the US and India have a "framework" for their strategic partnership, the Under Secretary agreed that it must be filled in with more substance. The bureaucracies, laws and regulations in both countries impede progress, which requires both countries to redouble their efforts to achieve a breakthrough -- another reason why it was crucial for PM Singh's July 18 visit to the United States to be a success.

17. (C) The Under Secretary added that during his meetings at the MEA, it was quickly apparent that India and the US have a broad relationship and that much can be achieved in the areas of space, energy, and military cooperation. In addition, bilateral programs on HIV/AIDS, democracy and education were set to expand. He had also observed very high public expectations regarding civil nuclear cooperation and UNSC expansion, which required quick progress on overcoming US

regulations that inhibit cooperation on nuclear energy.

18. (C) Underlining that he could not speak for the opposition BJP (because he had resigned from the party in 1998 upon becoming Principal Secretary to former PM Vajpayee), Mishra pointed out that Vajpayee also wants the bilateral relationship to move forward, but it was unclear how it would develop and what would emerge. That is why both countries need to devise a "framework," he stated.

#### Expanding the UNSC

19. (C) On the UNSC, the Under Secretary underlined US interests in maintaining the Council's effectiveness. The USG was not opposed to new members, as long as they strengthen the UN. While the US was now thinking in terms of "two or so" new permanent members, the large gulf between US and Indian voting behavior illustrated the different ways of looking at the UN in the two countries. With this in mind, the two countries' interests at the UN would take some time to converge, he predicted.

110. (C) Mishra agreed that it was not clear how an expanded Council would function and how new members would behave, although he "couldn't imagine" that India's behavior in the UN will change markedly in the direction the US would like. It would take a "major development" to bring about such change, which was in part a function of the much broader US agenda at the UN than that of India. Mishra opined that movement towards expansion was well advanced and could not be stopped without an enormous amount of controversy.

#### The Trouble with China

111. (C) Mishra pointed out that the Chinese Ambassador in New Delhi has expressed strong support for India's entry into the UNSC, that the Chinese Premier had provided similar assurances to PM Singh, and that China will "never agree to Japan." When Burns responded that China has repeatedly stated during recent P-5 meetings that it would like to maintain the status quo in the Council, Mishra replied that he has had "wide experience" with the Chinese leadership at senior levels, and knew that they altered their public statements in different venues, but that their pro-India position should be taken as a matter of policy, as PM Wen had given such assurances to PM Manmohan Singh during his recent visit to New Delhi. The Under Secretary reiterated that the US is "more open" to UNSC reform than China is, and has been careful not to rule out an Indian seat.

112. (C) The Under Secretary pointed out that the US is now focused more on South Asia, East Asia and the Middle East than in the past, and that top USG priorities are dealing with Islamic terrorism and the competitive relationship with China. The Chinese military buildup demonstrates that the PRC is spending major sums of money to counter the American navy. The US did not view India as a "counterweight" to China, but has concluded that India's strategic interests are more closely aligned with those of the US than with China. This is valuable to the US-India relationship, he concluded.

113. (C) Mishra maintained that the bilateral relationship was "mutually rewarding," but that "contradictions" would remain, and that diplomats from both countries would have to overcome them. He was also glad to hear that the US was not bent on a "confrontation" with China, as that would not work, especially since India has a vested interest in its relationship with China and would not be drawn into confrontation.

#### The US Role in Asia

114. (C) The US is providing "balance" in Asia, and India would like that to continue, Mishra continued. Whether the US and India increase their military cooperation to "equalize" the Chinese military is "open for discussion," but a confrontation would be out of the question. India is also intent on forging closer ties with the countries of SE Asia and with ASEAN.

115. (C) Describing briefly the US strategy in Asia of linking countries to each other and to the US, the Under Secretary observed that the East Asian Summit sponsored by

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China represents an attempt by Beijing to keep the US out of Asia and is "not friendly." Mishra agreed, but pointed out that no countries in SE Asia oppose the US, and that they work together and pursue mutual interests in the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf, although differences on Iran remained.

#### Invitation to Washington

¶16. (C) The Under Secretary concluded the meeting by inviting Mishra to Washington to meet with Secretary Rice, who had worked closely together while both were National Security Advisors. Mishra confirmed plans to visit Washington later in the year and looked forward to seeing the Secretary.

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¶17. (C) The Under Secretary cleared this message.  
BLAKE